APPENDIX A

THE FABRICATED ĤADĪTH OF THE STORKS

INTRODUCTION

*The gist of the issue and heinous allegation is that the Prophet ﷺ recited the verse of Sūrah al-Najm, which mentions the three idols of the Pagan Arabs, and thereafter – we seek Allāh's refuge – he said: "**these are lofty dieties[234] and from them intercession is hoped**", and then prostrated! The idolators were overjoyed at what they took as the praise of their idols and they too prostrated. The pagans of Makkah were pleased and they began to claim that RasūlAllāh ﷺ had made peace with them by praising their idols (al-íyādhu billāh). According to various versions of this [false] story, the offensive lines were instigated by Satan and were issued upon the pristine tongue of the Prophet ﷺ. Some have said that– al-íyādhu billāh – the Prophet ﷺ was sleepy and he did not realise what he was reciting. And therefore verse 52 of Sūrah al-Ĥajj was revealed, effacing shayţān's prompted 'verses'. This is the claim of rumour mongers, which the enemies of our religion put forward, to defame Islām and cast aspersion on the Qur'ān. Orientalists refer to these, as the 'Satanic Verses'.*

There are many problems with this story and some claims contradict fundamental articles of faith.

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[234] *Gharānīq*, plural of *gharnīq*; literally means a stork or a crane – refers to idols; some have said that it refers to angels. Various dictionaries describe gharnīq as 'a white water-bird with a long neck and long bill' and some have described it as a 'bird with dark feathers similar to a duck'.

Given below is the Sunni position:

1. *The Prophet ﷺ recited Sūrah al-Najm and prostrated at the close of the sūrah. Imām Bukhārī and others have reported this event, but **none of them** mentioned the myth of the storks.*

2. *An overwhelming majority of scholars like Qāđī Íyāđ, Imām Rāzī and others have flatly rejected the story as patently false and based on fabricated narrations.*

3. *However, an objection still remains: if the story is entirely false, then what is the meaning of verse 22:52 in Sūrah al-Ĥajj that says:*

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ
فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ

And We have not sent before you, from a Messenger or a Prophet, except that when he recited, the Devil sneaked something alongside [the Prophet's] recitation. So Allāh will efface that which shayţān has slipped in between – and [Allāh will] clarify His verses. And Allāh is the Knower, the Wise.[235]

4. *The response to the above objection is of two types:*

   a. *The entire story is fictitious. No such event occurred where shayţān sneaked in his words. As for the meaning of verse 22:52 above, there can be valid explanations without the need for this story.*[236]

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[235] Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52.

[236] See Shaykh Ábdu'l Ĥaqq Dihlawī's explanation below.

b. *There may be some truth as to how shayţān tried to sneak in his own words, but not in the manner retold by heretics and enemies of Islām. There are plausible explanations which are consistent with fundamental beliefs. And this route is taken* ***only if*** *the reports of the story have some basis.*

5. *Whatever the case, the alleged words NEVER issued from the blessed tongue of the Prophet ﷺ, because the opening of the same sūrah [in which Lāt and Manāt are mentioned] clearly declares: "****He doth not speak of his own desire; rather, it is nothing but inspiration [waĥy] revealed unto him****"*[237]

6. *It should also be noted that immediately after the mention of Lāt and Manāt, the Qur'ān repudiates them as 'mere names, fantasies adopted by your forefathers and which you fancy; they do not exist in reality'*[238] *It is impossible that they can be praised – even if you take the āyah literally.*

7. *The sūrah goes on to extol the lofty ranks of the Prophet ﷺ. It is therefore that he prostrated in gratitude, at the end of the sūrah. This is 40 verses after the mention of Lāt and Manāt. So the claim that the prostration was related to the idols is patently false.*

8. *It should also be mentioned that scholars such as Ibn Ĥajar al-Ásqalānī investigated the routes and contested the claim of Imām Rāzī and Qāđī Íyāđ that none of the routes were authentic. This was an academic exercise – but everyone including Imām Ţabarī*

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[237] Sūrah al-Najm, 53:3-4.

[238] Sūrah al-Najm, 53: 23. See full translation below.

and others who reported these narrations, agreed that it is impossible for the Prophet ﷺ to have uttered those words; there can be explanations for the narrations, but the undisputed fact is that the Prophet ﷺ never uttered those words.

And Allāh táālā knows best.

I have summarised the above from Állāmah Ţībī's commentary on Mishkāt al-Maşābīĥ and Shaykh Ábdu'l Ĥaqq Dihlawī's explanation in Madārij al-Nubuwwah, the translations of which follow.

FROM ŢĪBĪ'S COMMENTARY ON MISHKAT[239]

The first Ĥadīth narrated by Ibn Ábbās ﷺ: "***The Prophet ﷺ prostrated after recitation of Sūrah al-Najm and everyone prostrated with him – Muslims and polytheists, the jinn and men.***"[240]

The Prophet ﷺ probably prostrated [in gratitude], because Allāh táālā has described his noble person in the beginning of the sūrah as '***he doth not speak of his own desire'.*** And in this sūrah is the mention of his closeness to Allāh táālā – and that He showed His Messenger great and magnificent signs – and the Prophet ﷺ saw Allāh táālā with his waking eyes, neither did his sight stray away nor transgress [the limits]. These are unique and exquisite blessings for the Prophet ﷺ, upon which he bowed down and prostrated to Allāh táālā in gratitude.

As for the idolators [of Makkah] when they heard the mention of their three idols, Lāt, Úzzā and Manāt – they too prostrated.[241]

The story that mentions that the polytheists prostrated because the Prophet 'praised' their idols is an utter lie. That he said: "***They are lofty birds;[242] and their intercession is hoped for***" is a patent falsehood.

How can it even be imagined that ***he*** would say so?

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[239] *Al-Kāshif áni'l Haqā'iq*, 4/1; On Prostrations of Recitation in the Qur'ān.

[240] *Bukhārī*, §1071.

[241] without realising the idols were refuted as 'mere names and absolute zilch in reality'.

[242] Referring to the idols; in Arabic ***gharānīq***; lit. 'birds'; known as '*story of gharānīq*'.

Especially when it is said in between:[243] "***He doth not speak of his own desire. It is not, except inspiration [waĥy], that is revealed unto him***",[244] and the verse: "***Those are not, but [mere] names that you have named yourselves and your forefathers; Allāh táālā has not revealed any proof for them [or their existence]; they are not following except false notions [borne purely out of imagination] and their own whims [and fancies]***.[245]

How is it possible [that it can be construed as praise of idols] when the very verse mentioning idols starts with a repudiating question [and dismissing it with disdain].[246]

The verse starts with, '***Do you not see***?' which is an explicit rejection and repudiation of polytheism. It means: "Do you hold these as partners alongside Allāh? Then tell me about their names, if they are gods – in fact, they are not, but mere names you have chosen yourself upon your own whims and fancies; and there is no proof that Allāh táālā has revealed these names."

Imām [Fakhruddīn Rāzī] in his tafsīr has narrated from Imām Muĥammad ibn Is'ĥāq ibn Khuzaymah[247] that he was asked about this story. He replied: "It was fabricated by renegades" and he then wrote a book refuting this [lie].

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[243] The verse of Lāt-Manāt is #19-20 falls in **between** the verse of the Prophet not speaking of his own desire is #2-3; and the denouncement of idols which is #23.

[244] Sūrah al-Najm, 53:3-4.

[245] Sūrah al-Najm, 53:23.

[246] *hamzah al-inkar* followed by *fā* indicates a statement. {**a-fa-ra'aytum**}: '***a***' the hamzah, is a question; here it is a rhetorical question, rejecting the statement that follows.

[247] Imām Muĥammad ibn Is'ĥāq Ibn Khuzaymah, Abū Bakr al-Sullami [312-223 AH].

Imām Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī said: 'This is a story which is not proven in any manner by way of narration.' Then he analysed all the narrators in these reports and demonstrated that they were all castigated and disreputable.

Imām Abū Manşūr al-Māturīdī in his ***Khaşīs al-Atqiyā'a*** said: The truth of the matter is that the phrase: "Those are lofty birds..", is a statement from the inspiration of the Devil to his minions among heretics and renegades [*zanādiqah*] and they spread this among people of weak and faltering faith, so they can sow doubts about our Formidable Religion. The noble person of the Prophet ﷺ is exonerated from such a [heinous] allegation as circulated in these reports.

A historian has said that the source of this fabricated report is Ibn al-Zabárīy. Those who wish to learn more about it may please refer to *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Allāh táālā knows best. We will also mention Imām Muĥiyuddīn al-Nawawī's similar analysis mentioned in his commentary of *Şaĥīĥ Muslim* in the third section.

Ţībī in the Third Section of Prostrations of Recitation

Narrated by[248] Ibn Masúūd that the Prophet ﷺ recited Sūrah al-Najm and prostrated [at the end]. And everyone present prostrated – except an old man from the Quraysh, who grabbed a handful of gravel – or dust – and raised it to his forehead and said: 'This much is enough'. Ábdullāh [ibn Masúūd] said: Indeed, I saw him thereafter, slain as an infidel.

[248] *Mishkāt al-Maşābīĥ*, §1037.

[Bukhārī & Muslim]. Bukhārī has the additional wording: The old man was Umayyah ibn Khalaf.

Qāđī Íyāđ[249] has said: The reason everyone prostrated is because, as Ibn Masúūd ﷺ has said: 'It was the first verse of prostration revealed.'

As for what the historians and Qur'ānic exegetes write about the background of the verse, that the praise of false gods of polytheists occurred upon the tongue of the Messenger of Allāh – peace and blessings be upon him – such an allegation is patently false; none of it is true or reliable – neither by way of narration, nor by reason. Because praise of an idol is kufr – and in no way can it be attributed to the noble person of the Prophet ﷺ, nor that it could have issued from his blessed tongue. It is grossly incorrect and inappropriate to say that the Devil spoke upon his tongue – because the Devil has no power over him.

[249] Qāđī Íyāđ ibn Mūsā al-Yaĥsubi al-Mālikī [d. 544 AH].

SHAYKH ÁBDU'L ĤAQQ DIHLAWĪ IN MADĀRIJ[250]

The Truth about a Rumour: We had mentioned in passing that a group of emigrants to Abyssinia returned to Makkah, upon receiving news that the disbelievers of Quraysh had made peace with the Prophet ﷺ.

The details of this rumour are like this:[251]

One day the Prophet ﷺ, while inviting the pagans of Makkah to Islām, was reciting Sūrah al-Najm. When he reached the following verse:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰٓ ﴿٢٠﴾

Do you not see Lāt and Úzzā; and Manāt, the third other.[252]

Satan interfered and made the following words to reach the ears of the polytheists of Makkah:

They are the lofty idols; and their intercession is hoped

After completing the sūrah, the Prophet ﷺ prostrated. Muslims in attendance prostrated and polytheists also prostrated. There was not a single disbeliever in Masjid al-Ĥarām who did not prostrate. Except one – according to the famous narration – Umayyah ibn Khalaf al-Jumaĥī, who picked up a handful of dust and wiped it on his forehead and said: "This much is sufficient."

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[250] *Madārij al-Nubuwwah*, 2/65; magnum opus of Imām Muĥaddith Ábdu'l Ĥaqq Bukhārī Dihlawī [d. 1095 AH], the finest and most authoritative work of Prophetic biography in the Persian language. The above is based on the Urdu translation of the same by Muftī Ghulām Muýīnuddīn al-Naýīmī [d.1391 AH / 1971].

[251] The shaykh has cited the rumour here; his analysis and refutation follows.

[252] Sūrah al-Najm 53:19-20.

After this, the idolators were very happy and said: "Muĥammad [ﷺ] has mentioned our idols, praised them and affirmed their intercession. So now onwards, we too shall respect him and accept him. [They further said:] Of course, we too do not consider [these idols as] creators, givers of sustenance, or givers of life and death. When Muĥammad [ﷺ] agrees with us, we too shall make peace with him and we will stop persecuting and tormenting his followers." This news reached everywhere in the region and the Devil helped spread it. When this news reached the refugees [from Makkah] in Abyssinia, they returned to Makkah. This event caused immense distress and pain to the Prophet ﷺ, and to comfort him and give him solace, Allāh táālā revealed the following verse:

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ
فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ

> And We have not sent before you, from a Messenger, or a Prophet, except that when he recited, the Devil sneaked something alongside [the Prophet's] recitation. So Allāh will efface that which shayţān has slipped in between – and [Allāh will] clarify His verses. And Allāh is the Knower, the Wise.[253]

When this verse reached the disbelievers, they said: "Muĥammad ﷺ spoke well of our gods and praised them; he is now regretful and [disavowing what he said] – therefore, we too shall withdraw our truce".

[***End of the Myth of Storks as it is retold***]

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[253] Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52.

Scholars of Islām have questioned the authenticity of this story.

Qāđī Íyāđ analysed this in his *Al-Shifā*, and declared that [the narrations via which this story is told] are weak [and therefore, unreliable].

Imām Rāzī in his tafsīr has proscribed it as an utter lie, fabricated by renegades. It is said that it was one among the libels of Ibn al-Zabárī.

The Prophet ﷺ, whose blessed tongue is the Exponent of Truth, the Quintissence of Veracity, about whom Allāh táālā has said: ***"He doth not speak of his own desire; indeed, [everything he saith] is not, but revelation [waĥy], inspired,"***[254]– how can it be possible that praise of idols could issue from his tongue? It is also impossible for the Prophet ﷺ to add something in the Qur'ān – deliberately, or mistakenly – that which is not a part of the Qur'ān. Especially adding something that blatantly contradicts the core message of the Unity of God [*tawĥīd*], brought by the Prophet ﷺ himself!

According to Bayhaqī, this strange and bizzare story is not established by any reliable report – and the narrators of the reports which mention it are disreputable and of questionable integrity.

Bukhārī has mentioned a ĥadīth in his *ŞaĥīĤ,* that the noble Prophet ﷺ recited Sūrah al-Najm and at its close, he prostrated. All the Muslims and polytheists, the jinn and men present prostrated. This much is narrated via authentic routes and trustworthy narrators – but none of them has mentioned this *Myth of the Storks*. Without any doubt, anyone who alleges that the Prophet ﷺ had 'respected' idols [at any time in his life]

[254] Sūrah al-Najm, 53:2-3.

becomes a kāfir. Therefore, we know by narrated evidence[255] and rational proof, that the story is apocryphal and a patent falsehood. This is the opinion of majority of scholars and ĥadīth masters.

However, some scholars like Abū Ĥātim,[256] Ţabarī,[257] Ibn al-Mundhir,[258] Ibn Is'ĥāq,[259] Mūsā ibn Úqbah,[260] and Abū Maáshar,[261] and some others, have reported this story via weak and unreliable narrators and in reports which are interrupted [*munqaţiý*], with skipped narrators [*mursal*], muddled [*muđtarib*] or inauthentic [due to other reasons].

Irrespective of the quality of these reports, it appears that there is some basis for the story and therefore, it is necessary to find plausible explanations and valid interpretations for these narrations so that the distasteful implications are warded off – but some exegetes strayed into alleys far from the road of satisfactory explanation and plausible interpretation.

For example, they said: These words were issued from his blessed tongue [we seek Allāh's refuge] in a state of sleepiness, and he did not realise what he was saying. And when he came to know about it, then Allāh táālā clarified [that the words were not part of revelation]. This is reported by Ţabarī via Qatādah.

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[255] Via reliable and trustworthy narrators.

[256] Ĥāfiż Ábdu'l Raĥmān ibn Muĥammad ibn Idrīs al-Rāzī ibn Abī Ĥātim [d.327 AH] famous exegete and ĥadīth imām.

[257] Ĥāfiż Abū Bakr Muĥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mundhir Al-Nīsābūrī [d. 318 AH].

[258] Muĥammad ibn al-Ĥasan al-Ţabarī, Abū Jaáfar [d. 323 AH].

[259] Muĥammad ibn Is'ĥāq ibn Yasār al-Madanī [80-151 AH].

[260] Abū Muĥammad Mūsā ibn Úqbah ibn Abī Ayyash [d. 141 AH].

[261] Abū Maáshar Najīĥ ibn Ábdu'l Raĥmān al-Sindi al-Madanī [d. 170 AH].

Qāđī Íyāđ rejected this flatly and refuted this 'explanation' and he said that it is absolutely impossible for him to be overpowered by Satan in any state – whether in wakefulness or in sleep.

Some proffer farfetched explanations and say that the Prophet ﷺ was forced by Satan and he uttered these words in a state of confusion [al-íyādhu billāh] – and these words issued from him involuntarily. This one is worse than the first, downright vicious, and totally unacceptable because Allāh táālā has said:

إِنَّ عِبَادِى لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ

Indeed upon my slaves – you do not have any power.[262]

Satan has no power over the slaves of Allāh. And if Satan indeed had such power, he could compel people to do things, and none of us would have the power to do any good deed.[263]

Another explanation put forward, is that the idolators of Makkah would describe their false gods in this manner, and the Prophet ﷺ was used to hearing this and it had lingered in his subconscious and it slipped out of his blessed tongue inadvertently [*al-íyādhu billāh*]. Qāđī Íyāđ has rejected this as well [as the Qur'ānic verse repudiates such a possibility].

Another explanation is that: When the Prophet ﷺ reached the verse: "***And Manāt, the third other,***" the polytheists present panicked and thought that the Prophet ﷺ would denounce their idols and deplore them, so they rushed to add these words along with the recitation of the

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[262] Sūrah al-Ĥijr, 15:42 and Sūrah al-Isrā'a, 17:65.

[263] That is, Satan cannot compel humans to do a bad deed; however, he instigates them, seduces and incites them and convinces their *nafs* to obey him and follow him.

Prophet ﷺ, as it was their habit to cause disturbance during the recitation of the Qur'ān. This was attributed to the Devil because it was by *his* incitement that the polytheists did this act – or it can be said that these polytheists were devils among men [*shayāṭīn al-ins*].

Another rationalisation [*ta'wīl*] is that the Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān slowly and with pauses between verses. Satan was waiting for the opportune moment to add his evil bit. When the Prophet ﷺ paused after the verse, Satan began to recite in a voice and tone similar to that of the Prophet ﷺ and those sitting close to him mistook these words as the Prophet's ﷺ own utterance and then spread this erroneous notion.

The author of *Al-Mawāhib*[264] said that it is an excellent explanation. Qāđī Ibn al-Árabī,[265] a towering Mālikī savant, also considers this as a commendable explanation and said that Allāh táālā has informed that it has happened before with Prophets and Messengers, that on occasions, the Devil has interfered and added his own words in the middle of their speech. This verse [i.e of Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52] clearly explains that it was the Devil who added these words in between the speech of the Prophet ﷺ and the words were not uttered by the Prophet's ﷺ blessed tongue.

If one objects: These rationalisations are necessary only if the story is well-established as truth; if the story is totally fake and apocryphal, what then would be the meaning of the verse 22:52 – "***And We have not sent a Prophet or a Messenger before you..***"?

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[264] Imām Aĥmad ibn Muĥammad al-Qasṭallānī [d. 923 AH].

[265] Imām Abū Bakr Muĥammad ibn Ábdullāh ibn al-Árabī [d. 543 AH].

What does '***prompting of the Devil***' mean? And what is the meaning of "***abrogation and affirmation of abrogating verses***?

The answer is: If the story is deemed to be true, then the meaning of the word ***tamannā*** should be 'recitation' based on the word ***umniyyah***, and one of its meaning is 'reading'.

But if the story is deemed apocryphal and baseless, then ***tamannā*** takes the other meaning of 'wishing for' or the instigation of one's lower-self [*nafs*] towards desire and inclination towards the mundane world [*dunyā*] and getting entangled in it; or the temptation deep within oneself - which has to be amended. Such human tendencies are permissible for Prophets as long as they are not continuous or persistent.[266]

The Prophet ﷺ has himself said: "Indeed there is a clouding upon my heart and I seek Allāh's forgiveness for it"[267]

Sometimes, ***tamanna*** means: the Prophet's desire for his people to accept the truth and faith; his desire for more people to become Muslims. Or the desire for something that draws people closer to faith – and because the

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[266] The verse says: ***idhā tamannā***; going by the second explanation, it means: 'when they wished for something' – ***alqa'sh shayṭānu,*** the Devil tried to instigate and try to inveigle them – ***fa yansakhu'llāhu mā yulqish'shayṭānu***, Allāh ta'álā will efface those thoughts and redirect them – ***thumma yuḥkimullāhu aāyatihi***, and then Allāh will instill the right thing in their hearts and guide them. See the full translation according to this approach at the end of this citation.

[267] *Muslim*, §2702; *Abū Dāwūd*, §1515. Qāđī Íyāđ has said: These are moments when his blessed heart was distracted from the remembrance of Allāh – because he was always preoccupied with the *dhikr*/remembrance of Allāh. He ﷺ sought forgiveness for that. It is also said that it is his concern for his *ummah* [followers] because he was shown their deeds and he was worried for them and therefore sought forgiveness.

Satan incites [*ilqā*] people against it, his [Prophet's] heart is overcome with grief [for his people]. Since Prophets are immune from sin – and from the instigation of the devil – and due to their honour and high esteem near Allāh, they are kept away from what the Devil seeks to add; Allāh táālā shows His Prophets the signs which will keep them steadfast in ther mission and focussed on the Hereafter. This is what: "***and Allāh will establish his signs***" means. There is infinite Wisdom in this which no one except Allāh táālā knows. This is the summary of Bayđāwī's explanation of this verse. In the end of his explanation of the verse, Bayđāwī says: 'herein is proof, that it is possible for Prophets to forget and be subject to confusing thoughts'. Allāh táālā knows best.

End of Citation from Madārij.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The verse according to Shaykh Ábdu'l Ĥaqq's explanation means thus:

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ
فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ

> And We have not sent before you, among a Messenger, or a Prophet, except that when he wished, the Devil prompted alongside [the Prophet's] wish. Then Allāh will efface that which shayţān tried to incite – and Allāh will instill His signs. And Allāh is the Knower, the Wise.[268]

[268] Sūrah al-Ĥajj, 22:52.